Constants, Variables

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/4739495.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham
Additional Tags:	Hannibal is Hannibal, Canon-Typical Violence, Will Finds Out, Multiple times, Kissing, Anal Sex, Top Hannibal, Bottom Hannibal, Hannibal is Versatile, Murder Husbands, eventually, Time Loop
Language:	English
Collections:	Hannibal Fic Recs (Hannigram), Hannibal
Stats:	Published: 2015-09-13 Updated: 2015-10-28 Words: 14,227 Chapters: 4/?

Constants, Variables

by grace_of_baal

Summary

Hannibal inexplicably finds himself living the same mundane day over and over again. Naturally, he turns this inconvenience to his advantage and into a source of limitless amusement, pleasure and opportunity. It's only a game for him initially, and unfortunately for Will Graham he's at the center of it all - but before long Hannibal discovers that the stakes are far higher than he had previously anticipated. Inspired by the likes of *Groundhog Day* and *The Edge of Tomorrow*.

Notes

After watching the two movies mentioned in the summary, I thought this would be a fun concept for a Hannibal story, so here we are. I'm not completely sure about the length yet and the ending isn't set in stone either, but I'll see where it takes me. Minor edits may follow as we go along. Hope you'll all enjoy!

Eggs Florentine

Hannibal, with his impeccable memory, remembered the day it all began in perfect detail. It was an exceedingly ordinary one, and no matter how many times he combed through that morning in hindsight, he could find nothing out of place, nothing that would have signalled what was to come. Then again, even if he had known, there was little he could have done; such was the nature of his predicament.

Birds were chirping outside. Rays of sun were beginning to stream in between the curtains, strongly enough that Hannibal could feel the light through his closed eyelids. He had been lying awake for some time, making mental preparations for the day ahead - not that he had anything in particular planned. He only had some patients to see and no need to acquire any more meat for the time being, so the Chesapeake Ripper wouldn't be exposing himself tonight.

It was then the beeping of Hannibal's cell phone interrupted the peaceful silence of dawn. It was unexpected, as messages before nine in the morning were not a common happening since his years as an emergency room surgeon. Rolling over towards the bedside stand, Hannibal reached for the phone. The corner of his lips turned upward when he saw that the sender was Will Graham. An invitation to the Quantico FBI headquarters - the first in several weeks, now. Will had claimed during his recent sessions that there had not been many notable cases during the time, and Hannibal cheerfully wondered how much truth there was to this. No matter; it was hardly relevant. He wasn’t about to be offended if Will was lying to him. On the contrary, for he knew Will didn't make the effort to not be brutally honest to everyone.

Hannibal had already made his decision. It was always intriguing to observe Will in his natural social environment, so he was not about to let this opportunity go to waste. And, all things aside, he enjoyed Will’s company. Rarely did another human being bring Hannibal a simple pleasure like Will did, akin to what he felt when he listened to music or appreciated a painting. Only a select few people, like Alana Bloom, had granted him that experience previously, but Will was all the more enticing to Hannibal with his empathy and instabilities. Even better, he seemed to be more than tolerant of the psychiatrist’s presence by now, which was indeed quite pleasing to Hannibal.

Slipping out of bed, Hannibal padded over to the bathroom and groomed himself, then went down to make breakfast, still in his pyjamas. The fridge and pantry were stocked with fresh meat and produce, but today Hannibal settled for simpler fare. Eggs Florentine it would be. Humming softly to himself, he arranged the ingredients and utensils on the counter, while giving the clock a cursory glance. He had more than enough time to meet Will today, as his other engagements were all in the afternoon.

Some time later, the rich smell of bacon was wafting through the kitchen, where Hannibal stood at the stove tending to the eggs. He allowed himself ample time to enjoy his breakfast before getting dressed and embarking on the trip to Quantico.

It was rather early, but the FBI headquarters was bustling with students and agents alike. Having received his visitor's badge, Hannibal made his way down the hall, having to unceremoniously push past several bodies, and felt someone step on his foot, much to his irritation. Will was just coming around the corner as Hannibal approached; Hannibal assumed he was recently at the crime scene, judging by his clouded expression. His dark hair seemed even more unruly today, and Hannibal caught himself thinking that he quite liked the look of it.

"Hello, Will," said Hannibal with a nod and the barest hint of a smile.

"Hi." Will was rather brusque, clearly wishing he was anywhere but where he currently was. Hannibal didn't blame him for his lapses in social etiquette, as the profiler was understandably often distracted. His mouth was turned in a deep frown and he kept touching his glasses, the gesture nervous and angry at once. Still, Hannibal felt a prick of distaste at Will's rudeness as he sometimes did, an involuntary and nearly physical response.

He inquired politely, "Are you all right?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," Will responded in a clipped tone that suggested exactly the opposite, looking down and away. At last, he had apparently decided to take his glasses off, but they escaped his fingers and he dropped them with a muttered curse. Simultaneously Hannibal heard a *crunch* and knew that Will would need a new pair of glasses. A young man, probably a student, had stepped on them and was now apologizing profusely, to which Will merely knit his brows in resigned annoyance.

Hannibal bent down and picked up the broken plastic for him as the student slipped away, red-faced. "This is unfortunate."

Will thanked him, then sighed. "I can live without them for a few days. It's no big deal." As they walked into an empty classroom to speak in private, Hannibal waited a beat, and as he expected, Will opened his mouth again, gaze lowered apologetically. "I'm sorry, Dr. Lecter. I think I'm stressed; this case isn't like the others."

"How so?" Hannibal asked patiently.

Will raked his fingers through his hair. "Jack probably doesn't want me to tell anyone this... but we think the killer is targeting me."

Interesting. Hannibal let worry and surprise surface on his features. "Should you be out there, Will?"

"I doubt even the gutsiest killer would try to murder me at the scene at eight in the morning, surrounded by FBI." A humourless smile cracked Will's face.

Hannibal didn't return the expression. "Still."

"I'll be fine. As far as we know, this guy could just be a raving idiot, looking for attention..." Will said, waving his hand in a nonchalant manner, but Hannibal detected a faint tremble in his fingertips.

"But I imagine the murder wasn't one to take lightly, if you and Jack were called upon."

Will grimaced. "Yeah, I guess you're right. He certainly has a knack for violence, that's for sure." He drew out the crime scene photos from his breast pocket, allowing Hannibal a glimpse. Ravaged flesh and blood everywhere, the work short on finesse but not on brutality. Hannibal saw a dangerous rage embedded there; a singular, focused rage. Amidst the carnage Hannibal saw that there was a sheet of paper placed in the center of the room - a printout of a Tattle Crime article, with Will's face plastered on the front. Flecks of redness stained it, and there were holes ripped into the places where Will's eyes would have been.

"Why do you suppose you have him on your tail?" Hannibal asked, handing the stack back.

Will shrugged helplessly, looking more tired than afraid - but he looked very tired. "I have no idea. I'm responsible for the misery of many criminals, so I'm surprised it took this long for this to happen, to be honest."

Hannibal fell into step alongside Will, who had sunk into a grim silence. On any other day Hannibal would have extended an invitation to a meal or coffee at the very least, but today his schedule simply would not permit it. Perhaps sometime during the coming week, he thought, he'd bring Will back home for dinner.

He didn't tell the agent any of this. It would cause unnecessary anticipation or trepidation for him, Hannibal knew. Will already had enough on his mind.

Next they went to the autopsy room. Jack Crawford and the forensics team were already there, deep in a discussion of whatever evidence the body had yielded to them, which turned out to be nothing substantial. Hannibal was hardly interested in the murderer, truth to be told; it was somewhat intriguing that he had chosen to target Will specifically, but otherwise he seemed a pedestrian creature, no one that merited Hannibal's attention. Jack clearly thought differently, and Hannibal understood why - that overwhelming savagery that he had noticed, even just from the photographs.

"He literally tore the victim apart," said Beverly Katz to Hannibal, though anyone could have seen it for themselves from the body.

Jimmy Price added, "No firearms were used in the killing; we can tell he used a knife, but a lot of it was done with objects that were in the house… and his bare hands."

Hannibal had to acknowledge that the killer had some skill, because after all this he had hardly left any incriminating evidence. It would take time to pinpoint any suspects, and Will had nothing more to offer at the moment. He likely did, reconsidered Hannibal, but was not ready to share. The younger man was more on edge than usual. This killer wanted to do this to *him*.

Hannibal looked down at the mangled remains of the victim. He voiced his concern for Will to Jack, to which he responded with tight-lipped nod. Hannibal was very well aware that his advice would likely not be heeded, by neither Will nor Jack. It was perfectly possible that in the absence of Will, there would be other casualties, and both men were far too self-righteous

to let this happen. A pity, as Hannibal sensed that the killer was a viable threat to Will, and could strike again in rapid succession judging by his current agitated state.

Will left the room in an even more morose mood than before, and started in the direction of the morgue. Hannibal volunteered to wait while Will was inside. He surmised that he didn't have business there, but only wanted to be alone and clear his head. Hannibal too was familiar with the certain comfort dead bodies brought to one's mind - not that he had to seek such comfort all that often.

"It's fine," said Will, almost sheepishly.

"I must insist." Hannibal noticed the glint of appreciation in Will's eyes before the younger man pushed through the door with a tight-lipped smile. Hannibal found a chair nearby and sat back, letting his eyes half-close.

Will emerged some time later, his demeanor considerably less jittery than it had been. He explained that he had been called on to investigate the neighbourhood of the murder and conduct interviews in search of clues, this afternoon. He would be done by suppertime, Will said. Hannibal apologetically responded that he would be unable to join him, and they parted, a faint scent of disappointment in the air. Will's next session wasn't for another three days, the Monday.

All in all, a pleasant enough morning.

The afternoon, by contrast, was long, but one like any other. Hannibal found himself longing for Will's company during a particularly dull therapy session, and inwardly chided himself for not focusing on the task at hand. He was not one to have his attention be so easily diverted, but Will's entrance into his life had changed that.

He almost considered inviting Will to dinner anyway, despite the deadlines for various psychological journals creeping up on him, but in the end he ate alone.

After Hannibal awoke, he kept his eyes shut for a while longer, relaxing to the sensations of his own steady heartbeat and breathing. The beeping of his cell phone rudely pierced the quiet of the morning, which had previously only been peppered with birdsong from outside the window. Hannibal opened his eyes. Two days in a row? Most unusual. He frowned at the text displayed; again from Will. Even stranger. It read the same as the one he remembered from the day prior, asking him to visit Quantico. Only then did Hannibal's eyes fall on the timestamp of the message - he could have sworn *yesterday* was Friday....

Sitting up now, Hannibal scrolled back through his inbox. No identical text from Will Graham, nor any others he recalled receiving yesterday. The date had not miraculously corrected itself. Friday, it said.

Hannibal got to his feet and went to his study, this time opening his day planner. His eyes skimmed over his scheduled appointments and he was certain that he had seen all of these patients yesterday. He recalled every one of the words from their conversations with clarity. His steps quicker than normal, Hannibal went downstairs to the kitchen and opened

the refrigerator. There were five eggs left in the shelf rather than three after he had made the poached eggs.

After a brief pause, he busied himself by cooking Eggs Florentine again, frowning during the whole process.

Over breakfast, he made the decision to honour Will's second invitation to come to Quantico, and hopefully gain a better understanding of... whatever it was that was happening.

The drive to the FBI headquarters was identically uneventful as yesterday's. The same fair-haired woman was on shift at the reception, and she handed Hannibal his visitor's badge as though nothing was out of place. Hannibal counted the faces that he'd seen yesterday as he walked through the academy again. *Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen*… it was a pointless exercise. Once again, just before he rounded the corner that Will was waiting behind, he was stepped on, the pressure of the stranger's foot on his own disconcertingly familiar.

At the sight of Will, Hannibal's eyes narrowed slightly. His outfit was the same blue flannel shirt and khaki pants he had been wearing yesterday, though Hannibal supposed that was hardly conclusive in Will's case. The glasses on his face were more telling - they were identical to those that broke the day before. Hannibal halfheartedly entertained the possibility of him having bought a new ones already.

"Hello..." Hannibal, unlike himself, trailed off. Uncertain.

Will hadn't noticed - or was appearing not to, if he had. "Hi." It was the same. The same pitch and tone of voice. The same averting of the gaze, twitch of the jaw. The back of Hannibal's neck tingled. Subconsciously, his fingers drummed on his thigh, the nearest to a nervous gesture he would ever display.

"Are you all right?" Hannibal tried, recalling their brief conversation yesterday.

"Yeah, I'm fine," said Will, and proceeded to drop his glasses with a curse. A young man stepped on them and broke them, cleanly in two. Hannibal regarded the incident impassively, this time not moving to pick up the remains of the eyewear. His mind was racing, trying to understand.

"This... this is unfortunate." His own voice sounded strange and distant to him, like it was coming from someone else's larynx instead of his own.

"I can live without them for a few days. It's no big deal," said Will, crouching to pick the fragments up. Hannibal lost all doubt at this moment. Something bizarre was occurring, and he could only acknowledge that it had caught him off-guard. Before he could say anything, Will continued, as if reading from a script - "I'm sorry, Dr. Lecter. I think I'm stressed; this case isn't like the others."

"How so?" May as well go along with it, and if this was a particularly vivid dream he hoped he would wake soon. Hannibal very well knew he rarely dreamed. When he did, they were usually nightmares; was this one of them? Will went on to explain how a killer was targeting him, then again showed Hannibal the photos of the crime scene. Although he remembered

every detail from those snapshots, he accepted them from Will and looked through them as though for the first time.

"Dr. Lecter... are you feeling all right? You look a little pale." A note of concern had entered Will's voice, quite endearingly. Even when under high stress, he never failed to put himself in the shoes of others. He just didn't show it often.

"Do I?" Hannibal blinked, the reaction not entirely feigned. "It's nothing, Will." Almost desperately, he searched Will's eyes for anything other than normalcy as he handed back the photos. There was nothing, and Hannibal was forced to acknowledge that he was completely, utterly alone. Not that this was largely different from usual, as his life was one that demanded his solitude - but it was never quite like this.

The rest of the day passed exactly as the previous one had. His patients used the same words they had yesterday during their sessions. Somehow, Hannibal was able to proceed with the sessions as normal, pretending he had never heard what they had to tell him before. After work, he went home and made dinner. He realized halfway through the cooking process that he was preparing the same braised shank that he had eaten the day before. The thought hadn't even crossed his mind earlier, and Hannibal frowned at the dish for several seconds before cutting into it.

He went to sleep early.

He awoke again to Will's text message. It was Friday. This time, he declined the invitation, although he doubted it would change anything. He made Eggs Florentine for the third time, still savoured it, then spent the rest of the morning sketching and reading in an attempt to clear his thoughts. He had his appointments in the afternoon, the same ones as from the previous day, and the one before it. Hannibal had to refrain from mechanically giving his recommendations to the patients prior to them opening their mouths. He hadn't expected to find something this insignificant so gruelling, but he supposed it was a new experience even for him.

This time, Hannibal went grocery shopping before returning home from work, and bought a lobster, generously large. He broiled the tail, and it tasted especially succulent that evening - a welcome change from the meats he more often ate on a regular basis. After washing the dishes, Hannibal chose to stay awake later into the night, watching the world around him go on from his armchair with a glass of wine. If he didn't sleep at all, could he be freed from this irritating, absurd cycle of identical Fridays? As it neared twelve a.m., Hannibal drew out his phone and placed it on the table in front of him, intending to not take his eyes off of the clock on its screen.

He had only blinked, or at least thought he did. He was entirely unsure of what had happened, because when he opened his eyes again, he realized he was in bed. He was almost immediately greeted with the bleep that no doubt signalled the message from Will. Hannibal slowly picked up the phone, and lying on his back under his covers, he looked at the screen. Unsurprisingly, still Friday. Pulling back the covers, he sat up in bed, swinging his legs over the side of the mattress, and exhaled softly.

He hardly thought before his thumb came down to touch the ‘call’ button of his phone. Hannibal counted three rings before Will picked up. Had Will hesitated before doing so? There was no questioning that he was in close proximity to his phone, having sent Hannibal a text mere minutes ago. “Hello?” His voice was a welcome sound to hear, but at the same time it too sharply reminded Hannibal of his new reality.

“Good morning, Will.” He wondered if his voice was the same as it was always.

Maybe not, because Hannibal sensed Will’s surprise through the receiver. Unless he had no caller ID, perhaps? “Dr. Lecter. What...”

“I just wanted to let you know…” Hannibal paused, ponderous. What was he doing? This phone call was impulsive and foolish. What could he possibly achieve by attempting to tell Will what was happening? What he *thought* was happening? No, he would have to do better. At Hannibal’s silence, Will said with some impatience, “Let me know what?”

“Never mind. I shall be at Quantico before ten o’clock.”

“Okay… I’ll see you there. Thanks for agreeing to come.” There was a puzzlement mingled in those words.

“Of course.” Hannibal was about to hang up, but Will spoke before he could, slowly.

“Hey, Dr. Lecter?”

“Yes?”

“Are you okay? You seem a little…” Will didn’t finish his sentence, his voice tinny over the phone.

Hannibal found himself smiling faintly, though he was unsure of exactly why. “A little what?” Still, a guardedness crept into his voice.

“Um… I don’t know,” said Will, as though he regretted bringing the topic up. “Sorry, I didn't mean to intrude. I thought you sounded a bit tired, that’s all.”

That would be an understatement, Hannibal was tempted to say for a jarring moment. “I’m fine, Will. Thank you for asking," he replied instead.

“If you say so.” Hannibal knew that Will didn’t believe him. The agent was far too perceptive for that. “I’ll see you in a bit, then.” The line went dead, and Hannibal set down his phone. Irrationally, he felt lonely. However, it was only in passing - only a mere ghost of the emotion, for something else began to overtake it rapidly. His lip curled up in a wry smirk as realization dawned on him. Perhaps this Friday didn’t have to be so utterly *boring* after all - if he worked for it, that was. He didn’t mind; there was little else for him to do now, was there?

That bloody photograph of himself with his eyes torn out was etched onto the backs of his eyelids, he felt. Will had experienced a dull, numbing dread rather than a rush of fear when he first stepped into the crime scene, but it was quickly morphing itself into a searingly cold

creature in the pit of his stomach. He had done his best to appear calm and collected to Jack and the others, but alone now, he was left with nothing but his anxiety to wrestle with. He was losing the fight.

Lost in his thoughts, he nearly walked into Hannibal as he rounded the corner, hustled forward by the mass of students going to and from classes.

"Hello, Will," said Hannibal, nodding at him.

"Hi." Will inwardly kicked himself; he hadn't intended to be so gruff, but his preoccupation with the murderer made it difficult.

Hannibal seemed unfazed, asking, "Are you all right?"

"Yeah, I'm fine." *Damn it*. He still sounded like someone who would rather not be talking at the moment, which was, to be fair, the case. However, he was well aware of how much Hannibal valued common courtesy, and he had no desire to offend his psychiatrist. Will couldn't help but cast his eyes downwards. But had Hannibal even noticed? Will wasn't sure if it was his overactive imagination that was at fault, but he was almost certain that Hannibal was looking and acting… strangely. Of course, the doctor always had his quirks and was an eccentric man to say the least, but something about him struck Will as different today. His eyes were distant, intensely focused on something other than Will, even while they were conversing. It was unlike him.

Will pulled his glasses from his face to give them a polish, but fumbled and lost his grip on them - almost simultaneously, Hannibal moved, so quickly that Will hardly saw it happen. In an outstretched hand, he had caught the glasses before they hit the ground, and likely be trampled by the stampede of students flooding the hallway.

Will blinked. "Thanks a lot," he said as Hannibal handed the glasses back to him. Privately, he had been holding a vague notion that Hannibal was athletic, but this was unexpected. Before he could think more of the incident, someone jostled him so hard that he was nearly shoved into Hannibal's front.

"My pleasure," replied Hannibal, disregarding this and grinning. It appeared to Will that he was almost *smug*, though the agent didn't have the faintest idea why. Surely it wasn't because of his admittedly impressive catch of Will's glasses? Hannibal didn't strike Will as someone who took such… *childish* satisfaction in mundane happenings. "Shall we?"

"Right. Yeah," said Will with a small shake of the head. He was getting the sense that Hannibal couldn't stop smiling, and he was unsure whether he found it charming or unsettling.

Memento Mori

Hannibal waited in the chair outside the morgue for Will like he had in previous days, watching the same several people go about their business in the hall. Emerging from the room, Will once again told him about the interviews he was to conduct this afternoon. This time, Hannibal offered to go with him.

Will said, “Didn’t you mention having patients today?”

“No, I didn’t,” replied Hannibal smoothly. Had he? Unsettlingly, he could not remember with accuracy. The days were beginning to blur together. Hannibal made a mental note to make written records when he got home, then realized it was futile. His world reset itself at midnight and nothing survived the process, save for his memory (for that, he was grateful).

“Huh,” said Will. He didn’t push further.

In fact, Hannibal had cancelled all of his appointments of the day before he made his way to Quantico. He was aware it was highly unprofessional of him to have done so - mere hours before the sessions - but he had no other options for obvious reasons. Still, it was less than pleasant for Hannibal to listen to his disgruntled patients over the phone; an unfamiliar experience indeed. With a sigh, Hannibal had wondered if he would have to go through the process every day from now. Why did these insignificant details bother him so? He had been living in relative comfort for too long, perhaps.

As promised, Hannibal shadowed Will through the interviews for most of the afternoon, and they discovered nothing of particular interest from the residents of the neighbourhood where the crime took place. They were no closer to catching or even identifying the man who wanted Will’s blood. Hannibal could almost palpably feel Will’s unease grow next to him, hanging like a chill in the air.

“Well, I guess I’ll see you for my session on Monday,” said Will heavily at the end of the day.

Not quite, thought Hannibal. “Yes, of course.” He added, his voice dropping lower, “Please, Will, be vigilant.” He placed a firm hand on Will’s shoulder to emphasize himself and the gravity of the situation. As usual, Will flinched minutely at the touch, but he said nothing of it.

“I will.” Will glanced down at his feet, his hand going up to fiddle with his glasses before realizing that they were broken and in a garbage bin back in the FBI Academy. “I’m sure I’ll be fine. Thanks for the concern.”

“You’re welcome. Have a good evening.”

“You too.” With that, they parted. Hannibal drove home, stopping for some groceries on the way, although today he was less preoccupied with what he was to eat for dinner. He cooked braised shank again, more mechanically than he ever had, and ate with equally little passion. After a glass of wine to wash the meal down, Hannibal took a brief shower and went to his

study. Sitting at at his desk, he picked up the letter opener, its weight firm in his hand; lips pursed thoughtfully, he pressed his thumb onto the edge of the blade, harder and harder until he drew blood. He regarded the cut until it congealed into a vivid red line. With little else to do, he went to bed, the smarting of his finger accompanying him until he fell asleep.

Upon waking, Hannibal immediately lifted his hand to his face. The skin of his thumb was smooth and unblemished, no sign of the slice he had made into it last night. This opened up a new realm of options, and Hannibal intended to begin experimenting as soon as possible. Picking up his phone, he waited for Will's text message to come, precisely at seven twenty-two. When it did, Hannibal responded right away, telling him he would come to Quantico by ten.

Today, Hannibal didn't make Eggs Florentine, instead opting for scrambled eggs and sausages. It was time to introduce some more variety into his new life, he decided. He also wore another suit, styled his hair differently and took an alternate route to the FBI headquarters. However, he knew that the only way to bring change about the world now was for him to take some more drastic measures.

No one was sure of what happened in the FBI Academy at Quantico that morning. Consistent witness accounts were next to non-existent, despite the fact that the murder took place in the middle of a bustling hallway. The situation would only become clearer after the surveillance cameras were checked. Even then, more questions would be raised than answers. What was the motive behind the crime? Why there, why then? Why would Hannibal Lecter, of all people, commit such an act in the FBI headquarters in broad daylight? Several words could be used to describe Hannibal, thought Will, and "stupid" or "suicidal" were not among them.

All was perfectly normal when Will had gone into the morgue - exiting, he was met with absolute mayhem, and he had hardly gone closer to its source when a hysterical young woman barrelled straight into him, almost knocking him from his feet. The dull roar of screaming and shouting people surrounded them, and had Will not staggered back into a more secluded corner (dragging the woman with him), they may as well have been trampled by the panicked crowd. Will gripped the woman's shoulders with both hands, more vice-like than steadying or comforting.

"What the hell is going on?"

The woman wasn't crying but was apparently close to it. Her voice cracking, the words tumbled from her in a barely coherent stream. "There was an accident - or maybe a homicide - there was blood -"

"A murder?" Will let go of her. Being polite was the last thing on his mind; brushing her aside, he lurched back into the hallway. It was then a thought struck him - where was Hannibal? He fought through the heaving mass of bodies, inching his way toward the center of the commotion. More than once he nearly lost his balance as he was pushed and shoved. An elbow dug into his back and then he tripped over someone's foot, ending up on his hands and knees on the floor. He found himself face-to-face with the body.

The young man was splayed across the hall with his eyes wide open, bulging and glassy. Blood stained his front from the chin down, and something was stuck in his neck - the source of the bleeding. It looked to Will suspiciously like a writing implement. His breath catching in his throat, Will crawled closer, and with a shaking hand he groped for the man's pulse. Dead as a doornail. *What the fuck happened here?*

Jack Crawford soon arrived on the scene, the forensics team following closely behind. Will had attempted to piece together the crime prior to them coming, but his mind was refusing to focus, except for on one thing. *Hannibal*. Hannibal was nowhere to be seen. Will's heart was refusing to accept the direction his intuition was pointing in. He stood in a daze next to the corpse as the hallway was taped off, the remaining bystanders ushered away.

"Will. Did you see what happened?" Jack's voice was hard, pulling Will abruptly back into the present.

Will shook his head. "I… I got to him right after he died." He didn't mention Hannibal, and Jack seemed to have forgotten about him for the time being.

Jack rubbed his temples with his fingers before barking out orders. There was little evidence to collect, if at all. The logical next step was to watch the surveillance tapes. Will was barely surprised at what was revealed to them in the footage, but Jack let slip a murmured curse.

None of them could tear their eyes away from the image of Hannibal Lecter captured by the camera. Will replayed the segment over and over again, watching the psychiatrist move as quickly as a snake in the crowd, reducing himself to a mere blur in the already-grainy footage. When Hannibal had finished with his work, his victim was swallowed up by people in the hallway, only visible after they parted later. The man lay twitching on the floor with a fountain pen jutting out from his throat, driven into the jugular with monstrous force. It took several moments for those in the vicinity to register what had just occurred, and by then Hannibal had already slipped away. No one stopped his car from leaving Quantico, and now his whereabouts were unknown. They raided his home and office in Baltimore, but an initial search yielded nothing incriminating or out of the ordinary. Of course, there was no sign of Hannibal himself in either of the places.

Jack Crawford was worryingly silent on the whole matter, his expression masklike. On the other hand, Price and Zeller did nothing to disguise their astonishment at the day's ridiculous turn of events, while Beverly was doing her best to maintain her composure. They had proceeded with the autopsy with admirable calm, plucking out the bloodied fountain pen from flesh. The pen was finely engraved with the initials "H.L.". Will felt rather ill.

When Will saw the body of the victim - an academy student that he didn't recognize - he wondered why the man's features seemed so familiar to him. Only after studying the face for quite some time did Will realize that it was the same boy who had stepped on and broken his glasses that morning. It was no coincidence, but he kept this to himself without knowing why.

Stone-faced, Jack sent Will home in time for dinner, telling him to get rest in preparation for the headache that awaited them. For once, Will did as he was told without protest.

Why Hannibal? Why? As he drove back to Wolf Trap, Will was surprised at how little he was feeling. There was a sort of raw numbness in him, intermingled with utter bewilderment and confusion. Perhaps it would take some time for the pain of betrayal to engulf him. Perhaps after a good night's sleep, the true horror and absurdity of the situation would hit him.

With a deep sigh, he greeted Winston and the other dogs. Some of them were happily oblivious, their tails wagging, but there were a few animals that quickly picked up on Will's troubled mental state. He went inside, and tossing his coat over a chair, he first set out dinner for the dogs. Afterwards, he rummaged through the refrigerator for anything edible. He settled on a Tupperware of pasta that had been sitting in the far back. He couldn't say exactly when it was from, for he had no memory of making it; the noodles were solid and the sauce congealed into unappetizing clumps. He microwaved it and forced himself to swallow the stuff, mindlessly shovelling the food into his mouth with a spoon.

"Hannibal would think I'm fucking pathetic," Will mused under his breath. It took him a beat to process what he had just said, and a lump rose in his throat when he did. Will couldn't tell if it was from anger or something else. Anger at whom? At Hannibal, or at himself? His thoughts were in a complete disarray; at least he could place that blame squarely on the psychiatrist.

He sat unmoving at the table with his half-eaten pasta until one of the dogs nudged him in the legs with its snout. It was then Will had the peculiar feeling that someone was watching him, but he could see nothing in the blackness beyond his porch. Was it Hannibal, lying in wait to kill him as well? Or was he simply being paranoid? He slowly got up and maneuvered himself through the dogs, then opened his front door and stepped out onto the porch, Winston brushing against his legs. He squinted into the dark outside; all he saw were long shadows cast by the lights coming from his house.

"Dr. Lecter! If you're out there -" Will gritted his teeth. "If you're out there, you can go *fuck yourself*." His voice kept growing louder until he was nearly shouting. "*I fucking trusted you,* you son of a bitch!" Predictably, he received no answer, the wind moaning through the trees as if to mock him. Winston whined softly, and several other dogs had come to join them, their heads cocked in curiosity. Will didn't move for a long while, but the autumn night was becoming frigid, so he went back inside and shut the door. He couldn't shake the feeling that there were unfriendly eyes on him, however, and he kept himself surrounded by the dogs.

Hannibal was unsure if he was relieved or disappointed when he looked at the clock, the morning of what should have been three days after his first outlandish stunt at Quantico. It was indeed Friday again, and no doubt nothing would have changed from the day before despite everything that had happened. There was no reason for it to be otherwise, he supposed, since he was in his own bed again, rather than in a body bag in a morgue.

He hadn't gotten himself killed intentionally, of course. It was too large a risk for him to take - there was little way of knowing if death spelled a true end for him or not, even in his current condition. He was not afraid of dying but like most other human beings, he did wish for his demise to be a meaningful one.

Escaping after his first murder in the FBI Academy hadn't been difficult, and he had managed to elude the authorities without problems until the new day came. All the while, he tried to picture Will's face when he found out the perpetrator of the crime, or when he first laid eyes on the surveillance footage. It was a pity, thought Hannibal, that he couldn't be there to see it. He preferred not to spend the rest of his day in handcuffs, however, so he ran instead. Though it was amusing to be able to use the fake documents and escape routes he had prepared for emergencies, Hannibal figured the novelty would wear off quite soon. No, he desired to find something more entertaining to pass the time with. But he didn't want to reveal himself to Will. Not yet. He was saving it for a later time, like the final morsel of a delectable meal.

The second time he killed someone in Quantico ended similarly. Hannibal followed his prey into a washroom, stuffed his monogrammed pocket square into his mouth to stifle the screams - within the privacy of a stall, he snapped the man's neck and left the body on the toilet. It was over in seconds, and again he was long gone before the alarms were sounded, leaving him only able to imagine Will's reactions to it all.

The day after, Hannibal lingered in the autopsy room as Will left for the morgue. Zeller, Price and Katz had remained to clean up, and Jack Crawford was speaking to the latter. Hesitating for a mere millisecond, Hannibal snatched up a scalpel from a nearby table and in one fluid motion, he cut open Brian Zeller's abdominal cavity from sternum to bowels. The man barely had time to scream before he hit the floor, blood and entrails bursting from the massive gash —

It was Beverly who was the quickest on the draw. Hannibal recalled Will mentioning she sometimes helped him practice at the shooting range. It hadn't occurred to him that this information would ever be so relevant. Even from the opposite end of the room and in a near-panic, her aim was true. She fired several rounds, all of which Hannibal assumed met their marks, because the next thing he knew of the world were tremendous, crushing impacts to his torso — and then, jarringly, his silk sheets against his skin.

Hannibal sat up and pressed a hand to his chest, inside which his heart was beating steadily like always. It quickly became obvious to him that he had died in Quantico that morning. The gunshots must have killed him instantaneously. Yet, he felt no different, and everything seemed unchanged, including the date on his clock.

His breathing was slightly unsteady. There was a faint buzz in his body and limbs, a thrill he very rarely felt in his eventful life. He had been killed. Although Hannibal could remember nothing tangible of it, he had *died*. He tried to piece together the experience again, but there was a vacuum between the moment the bullets slammed into him and his waking this morning. Was that all that death was - emptiness?

"I cannot die." Hannibal said this aloud, a sentence he never thought he would come to utter. "I cannot die…" He repeated; the words were curious on his tongue. Well, he technically could, but now death was meaningless to him. Or was it? And, was it a blessing or a curse? Hannibal intended to find out in the days to come.

Seven twenty-two came, and his phone beeped. He read Will's text message for the eighth time with a smile on his lips. Today he wanted to call Will, so he did. Again, Will picked up

after three rings.

“Good morning, Will,” said Hannibal.

“Dr. Lecter? What…” It was incredibly good to hear that voice again, but Hannibal was practiced at not letting emotions colour his tone.

“I’m afraid this is quite sudden. I was wondering if you’d be willing to join me for dinner tonight.”

“Dinner? Uh…” Will mumbled something unintelligible, and Hannibal simply waited. “Hello? Uh, yeah, sure, that sounds good. I just thought you said you were busy…”

“No, not at all. And besides, Will, I’d make time for you even if I were.”

Will laughed from his end of the phone, a hint of awkwardness tingeing it. “I appreciate that, Dr. Lecter.”

“I’m looking forward to your company. I shall see you soon,” replied Hannibal, "and I'll drop by Quantico as well." He hung up. He was anticipating a pleasant evening, whatever its outcome may be. What gave him the greatest joy was that this dinner with Will was one he could shape to his liking, however many times he desired. An unprecedented amount of control, for better or for worse.

Feast

Chapter Notes

> Sorry for the long wait! Hopefully this was worth it, it's rather lengthy to make up for it (maybe a bit too lengthy; I'll probably try to cut down from the next one onward).

Hannibal spent that morning in Quantico and also went to John Doe's neighbourhood with Will in the afternoon. He did nothing differently that evening than he would have if his day wasn't going to repeat itself. After the excitement of the past few days, Hannibal desired to relax and enjoy himself, and enjoy himself he did.

The day after, he repeated the process - then again, the following day, and one more time after that. He was usually not one to settle into a monotonous routine but this was one he didn't mind. He made Will a different dish each night, gauging what best seemed to suit the profiler's tastes. They made pleasant if rather meaningless conversation, but in Will's company, Hannibal found it bearable, and it was an amusing game for him to attempt to steer their words in varying directions each time.

Hannibal, however, knew himself well. He desired to go one step further. Or two, perhaps. Bidding Will goodbye, Hannibal had already decided that from tomorrow, he would change the course of the evening once more.

Hannibal was mildly surprised when he successfully managed to rise at three a.m. that morning, rather than exactly ten minutes before Will's text message would arrive, like he had for every other day prior. The rules set for him now were frustratingly arbitrary, but there was hardly anyone he could voice his discontent to.

The night before, he decided to look further into the John Doe case in addition to his ongoing work with Will. Who was this murderer that was so interested in him? Hannibal had committed the address of the crime scene to memory. He had no difficulty finding the house again, especially having accompanied Will on his interviews. Recalling the forensics team's approximation of the time of death of the victim, Hannibal set out to arrive at the house by four o'clock in the morning. He had no plans for what he would do in actuality if he ended up face-to-face with the John Doe that so badly wanted Will dead, or worse. Hannibal was never opposed to improvisation, even when he didn't have significant room for error like he was fortunate enough to now.

When Hannibal exited the Bentley, the neighborhood was unmoving in the silence of the early morning. He breathed in the cool air, his nose finding nothing out of the ordinary in the surrounding area. He approached the house, tried the door handle. It was unlocked, and he went inside.

He was hit by the familiar stench of blood, which would mask the telltale scents of any hostiles in the area. His eyes narrowed, adjusting to the dark, but his instincts were warning him of imminent danger as he walked further into the house.

Hannibal was barely able to glimpse the figure crouched in the center of the ill-lit living room. The man - the murderer - saw him first, and that advantage was all that he needed. A glint of metal from the dark indicated to Hannibal that it would be wise to get out of the way, but this time he was not nearly swift enough.

The gunshot shattered the quiet of the morning, deafening. Hannibal's immediate observation was that the FBI had been wrong in their conclusions; this killer was not averse to the usage of firearms at all. The bullet caught him somewhere in the upper torso, and Hannibal didn't bother attempting to assess the damage. It didn't kill him instantly like when Beverly had shot him, but he surmised the wound to be life-threatening. After the initial impact and numbness, pain overwhelmed his nerves, driving the air from his lungs. His vision tilted dizzyingly and his legs had given way under him without him realizing. He only managed to drag himself several feet forward, his palms scraping on the floor, feeling the wet warmth beginning to soak into his front and coat his skin. Looking to one side, he saw that he was in close vicinity of the body of Doe's victim, the same one he recalled poring over in the autopsy room with Will in Quantico before. He almost laughed. *How bizarre.*

For Hannibal, with his colourful past, being gunned down was not an entirely new experience. However, it was certainly unfamiliar to him to be so badly incapacitated - being shot in the chest was something he had actively strove to avoid until now. And for good reason, he thought. He should have been more careful, but there was no incentive for him to be any longer. He had given into his impulses and now he was paying the price. No matter. He supposed he could learn from this.

Hannibal let out his breath in a low groan, his eyelids fluttering. His hands instinctively went grasping at the wound, and they came away slick with blood. The man prodded at him with a foot, turning him over onto his back; as hard as he strained he was unable to make out the murderer's face. And with that - he was gone. Hannibal was left alone with the corpse, no doubt soon to become one himself.

He inhaled and exhaled, but he could tell that not enough blood was reaching his brain, instead continuing to spill out through the ragged hole in his front. A cool calm washed over him. There was little more he could do, so he laid his head back on the floor, shut his eyes, and prepared to die - again.

When he came to, pain was so mercilessly crushing him that he almost regretted waking at all. It took several seconds for his brain to adjust to the feeling so that it could function properly. He was looking up at a bright white ceiling, and something was covering much of the lower half of his face. Hannibal took in shallow breaths, his initial confusion giving way to clarity - he hadn't died. It was still Friday.

It took great effort for him to not utter a moan out loud. He was having difficulty blocking out the pain, his mind too disoriented by drugs. The gunshot to the chest should have killed

him - it would have saved him much trouble. For the first time in his life, he lamented his resilient body. He had no choice but to wait until it failed him.

His vision was blurry, but he could make out some figures hovering over him. There was nothing of interest, so he let his eyes slide shut. He drifted in and out of consciousness, at times hanging in a realm somewhere in between. It was as though a great weight was sitting upon his sternum, gradually becoming heavier and heavier, making breathing increasingly laborious. Still, Hannibal's body persistently refused to let go; he was apparently not one to give up so easily.

An indeterminate amount of time later, a familiar voice from nearby reached his ears, abruptly penetrating the rather aggravating haziness.

"... I don't know what the *fuck* you were doing there, or why. But please, pull through this." There was a soft pressure on his hand. "*Don't you die on me, Hannibal*." The grip on his fingers tightened.

Ah, Will.

Hannibal forced his eyes open and saw Will's dark head floating near his own. He would recognize that visage anywhere, even when a fog conjured by medications and sickness hung between him and the world. Will hadn't noticed Hannibal's slitted eyes fall on him, and Hannibal left it this way. He would have smiled, had his face not been obscured by the oxygen mask. He focused every ounce of his remaining strength into hanging onto consciousness, holding Will's indistinct face in his gaze for as long as his eyes would stay focused. Will didn't leave him, and his fingers lingered on Hannibal's for some time. His chest throbbed mightily, and all the while, Hannibal was certain that he didn't have long left to live.

He was unsure when he had finally slipped away, but when he awoke again, he was in his own bedroom rather than in a hospital ward.

Hannibal jerked upright, his heart suddenly hammering violently in his chest - he took in a great gasp of air before stumbling from the bed and retching onto the floor, on all fours and still tangled in his sheets. There was little left in his stomach to expel, so he could do nothing but wait for the spasms to pass, his eyes beginning to stream from the exertion. It was as though he had woken from the grave rather than his bed. Breathing - previously so natural - took conscious effort, as if his lungs had forgotten how to work, not unlike when he was lying in the hospital.

He wondered if he had died, or if he had survived until midnight. Either way, it was obvious to him that his body had undergone quite the shock. He didn't have as firm a grip on the world as usual, and a part of him was skeptical of his current reality.

Will Graham's text message interrupted his dry heaves. Seven twenty-two already? How long had he been on the floor for? He called Will again, deliberately before he could fully catch his breath and regulate his pulse once more.

“Hello?”

“Good morning, Will.” The words came out in a harsh gurgle of sorts, startling both men.

“Dr. Lecter? What…”

“Will, I…” His voice grating in his throat again, Hannibal swallowed to steady himself. “I... just had a terrible dream.”

Will waited several seconds before answering quietly, “Are you okay?”

“No,” said Hannibal truthfully, part of him curious what Will would do, but another simply too shaken to lie. “I will be.”

"Hey, uh..." In the short silence that followed, Hannibal could practically hear the gears in Will's head whirring furiously. "I was thinking... it's been a while... Do you want me to come over tonight? I can keep you company, and maybe - uh - you can cook for me or something.” Abashedly, Will added in a mumble, “If you'd like, that is."

Hannibal smiled in pleasant surprise, the nausea in his gut quickly fading to a manageable level. "I would very much, as a matter of fact."

“Okay,” said Will, and he sounded relieved. “Are you still coming to Quantico this morning?”

It was Hannibal’s turn to pause. At last, he said, “I’m sorry, Will, I don’t think so. Not today.”

Will replied a little too quickly, “It’s fine, don’t worry about it. I’ll drop by later, then?”

“Six o’clock?”

“Six,” Will confirmed. “I’ll see you soon.”

Hannibal put the phone down, then went to the bathroom, stopping in front of the mirror. His hair was in a disarray and damp with perspiration, eyes exhausted. His head cocking slightly to one side, he undid the buttons of his pyjama shirt to expose the underlying flesh. There was no trace of the bullet that had gone tearing through it, but even so, Hannibal slowly ran a finger over the spot, regarding his reflection for several moments.

Through most of the day, he confined himself to his study. He didn’t realize that he had forgotten about his patients until he received a furious phone call from one of them, fifteen minutes into their scheduled appointment block, and he found that he didn't care. He hung up, turned off his phone and placed it in his desk drawer. He attempted to distract himself by drawing or writing, but his thoughts stubbornly and continuously returned to dwell on the slow death dealt to him by John Doe.

It had been a long, drawn-out process, excruciating even by his standards. The new day had not erased any of it from his memory, and his nerves could recall it all with vivid acuteness, so much so that he passed his hands over himself again more than once, reaffirming that his skin was as smooth and unbroken as it used to be.

Hannibal relieved his own shooting and stay at the hospital again and again, obsessively. It was undeniably traumatic, much worse than when he had died in the autopsy room. Replaying the memory in his head ended with his breathing quickly every time, pangs of phantom pains jabbing at him. Yet, he didn't stop. It mostly stemmed from his always-insatiable curiosity, but in a certain way, he craved it also.The visceral sensations stimulated him like nothing else.

Then there was also the image of Will in the hospital next to him. Hannibal revelled in the memory of the weight of Will's hand on his own - somehow it was burned more strongly into his brain than the pain from the wound. It was the most intimate contact between them thus far, Hannibal noted cheerfully, and he would have to uncover a way for it to happen that was less hazardous to his health.

When he answered the door, Hannibal was the picture of effortless, casual elegance, with a fringe of hair sweeping over his forehead and sleeves neatly rolled up to expose his forearms - no waistcoat or jacket today. Will took a moment to become used to the sight, for there were few times he had seen Hannibal in anything but a full three-piece ensemble. A smile lit Hannibal’s face when he saw Will, and at that, there was a pleasant twitch in his chest.

“Hey, Dr. Lecter.”

“Come in, Will. You’re early,” said Hannibal, glancing at his watch.

“Yeah, I managed to get out of work,” Will replied. “You do seem a little pale,” he remarked as he passed through the door. “Are you sure you’re all right?”

Hannibal passed a hand through his hair, sighing minutely. “Thank you for your concern. I suppose I have been feeling somewhat under the weather.” He didn’t seem to be lying; there was an air of fatigue about him, lines in his face that Will hadn’t noticed before, and he could have sworn his hair was tinged with more silver.

“Are you working too hard?”

“Perhaps,” admitted Hannibal.

Will shrugged off his jacket and thanked Hannibal when he took it from him. “Then *perhaps* you should slow things down.” He let the sarcasm and exasperation coat his words.

Hannibal chuckled, turning to the coat rack. “If only I could.” He led Will to the dining room, saying, "The food will be ready in a moment, Will."

"Sounds good," grinned Will as he sat.

True to his word, Hannibal soon emerged from the kitchen with an armful of steaming plates, their aroma alone making Will salivate. *Like I'm one of the fucking Pavlovian dogs*, thought Will ruefully. He couldn't blame himself. Dinner looked exquisite, and today he hardly paid attention to Hannibal as he informed Will of what he was about to put in his mouth.

"How was your day?" Will asked after chewing his first few bites; delicious. He intentionally avoided mentioning the morning just yet.

"The drive back took some time out of my day, there was a fair amount of traffic exiting Quantico..."

“Dr. Lecter…” Will stopped, considering simply keeping his mouth shut. Against his own will, he continued, “You weren’t at the FBI headquarters today, were you? Unless you did come by and I missed you…” Trailing off, he watched Hannibal carefully.

A muscle jumped in Hannibal’s face, and he frowned. “Yes, you’re right. My mistake.” He blinked, looking almost more unsettled than Will felt, but in a split second his expression seamlessly settled into calm indifference. Will, however, noticed Hannibal's hand briefly slide up to his chest, stopping near the heart, before it went back down to pick up his cutlery. An innocuous enough movement, but one Will had never seen Hannibal make before - and that was enough for him to consider it out of the ordinary.

“Are you sick?” Will blurted out before he could help it.

"Sick?" Oddly enough, Hannibal merely smiled in response, almost as though he was enjoying a private joke, while skewering a slice of meat on his fork tines. "No, I am not,” he answered, putting the morsel into his mouth. He said no more, and Will cast furtive glances up at Hannibal over the top of his wine glass, wondering what it was that the doctor wasn’t telling him. The rest of the meal progressed in this manner, peppered with transparent small talk, and after Hannibal had cleared the table they moved to the living room with glasses of wine. The light from the fireplace danced along the walls, and Hannibal was eyeing it intently as he drank.

"You look distracted," Will remarked.

Hannibal's eyebrow raised slightly. “The truth is… I have been having some personal difficulties lately.”

“Oh?” Will put down his glass, concealing his surprise with the gesture.

“Nothing that would interest you,” said Hannibal, swirling his wine and taking another sip.

Will couldn’t help but shake his head with an incredulous laugh. “You’ve got to be kidding me. Of course I’d be interested. I’m your…”

“My patient. It’s not your responsibility to shoulder my troubles in addition to your own - that would be my role.”

“I was going to say ‘friend’.”

“Is that so?”

“Is that really so hard for you to believe?” Will met Hannibal’s eyes in what felt to him like childish defiance. “I worry about you too, you know. I should be allowed to do that much,

don't you think?" *If I don't, who else would?* Before Hannibal was able to respond, Will continued, "So tell me, Dr. Lecter, what did you dream about last night?"

Hannibal lowered his gaze, his mouth pressing shut; it was very unlike his usual confident demeanor. This only further convinced Will that he was pushing the correct buttons, so he decided to stand his ground, his expression not softening.

"You were in it," Hannibal said finally. His face was carefully blank. "You died -" Will's nostrils flared at the unexpected answer, but he didn't interrupt - "and I was the one who killed you."

Will murmured, half to himself, "You dream about me?"

"Sometimes," said Hannibal, now staring directly at Will, his dark irises piercing and unfathomable. Will felt his cheeks burning. "I was aware that it was irrational, but I wanted to call you this morning, just in case…" Hannibal shook his head, then as if it just occurred to him, he said, "I'm curious, Will - do you refer to me by my first name outside of our sessions?"

Will's mouth parted at the sudden question, momentarily forgetting about what Hannibal had just revealed to him. "I…" It was also unlike him to be so non-sequitur. Amusement flitted across Hannibal's features at Will's hesitation.

"I won't be offended."

"Yeah, sometimes," Will said, echoing Hannibal's earlier response to him. "You know… you don't have to keep things from me. You say Jack treats me like a fragile teacup but you're not always so different."

"I don't want to overburden you, Will. My occupation is not nearly as stressful as yours."

"That's debatable. And even if it were true, I can handle it. I *want* to." Not looking for Hannibal's reaction, Will got up from his chair, setting the half-empty glass on the stand next to him, and shoved his hands deep in his pockets.

He sensed Hannibal follow suit behind him, also getting to his feet. He hardly dared move - he felt as if Hannibal was waiting for him to proceed. A strange impulse suddenly arose in Will when he turned to look back at him, who was standing almost uncomfortably close - *almost*. The fire cast an unearthly glow on his face and Will was drawn to it like he sometimes was.

... like he *often* was.

Will leaned in before he could make a better judgement, and Hannibal tilted his head to accommodate him as their lips met. Though it should have been inevitable - he was the one who had initiated the contact in the first place, after all - it still managed to catch Will off-guard, making the breath stick in his throat and heart skip a beat. He tried to memorize what Hannibal tasted like, his tongue flicking over the other man's lower lip and teeth. Hannibal had his palm cupped around the back of Will's head, fingers curling in his hair. Will dimly

found that his hand had snaked up to rest on the other man's front, where beneath the fine fabric of the shirt he could feel the firm muscle and heartbeat within.

Hannibal let out something like a soft sigh when he finally pulled back, his eyes fluttering closed.

"Is something wrong?" Will asked, dread already mounting in his stomach. He should have known that this was foolish; who did he think he was? To imagine *Dr. Hannibal Lecter* would want to do whatever *this* was… with him, Will Graham?

Hannibal looked at him from under hooded lids, his lashes catching the dim lamplight. The corners of his mouth turned up enigmatically, and Will could not quite decipher its meaning. "Wrong? No. Everything is as it should be." The edges of his words were husky, and Will's stomach gave a pleasurable squirm. As his hand dropped to caress Will's, still resting on his chest, Hannibal's smile widened into a genuine, unambiguous one - to which Will felt safe enough to let out a relieved laugh.

Hannibal raised his other hand to Will's face, hovering in the air as if to silently ask for permission, and Will resisted his instinctive urge to move away. The psychiatrist's thumb brushed his stubbled jaw, tenderly, leaving a hot tingling in its wake on his skin. Will couldn't remember the last time someone had touched him like this. His pulse still racing, he was grinning stupidly for some reason, scarcely able to wrap his head around what had just occurred; the warmth that had spread throughout his entire body told him he hadn't simply imagined the past five minutes. Hannibal's living room had taken on a surrealistic quality, and Will caught himself fearing his surroundings would simply melt away, a figment of his imagination. Nothing of the sort happened. Hannibal was continuing to look at him like he was a beautiful painting, taking in his every detail… Gradually, Will grew aware of a gentle throbbing in his groin, dull at first then suddenly overpowering. He knew exactly what it was and what it meant.

"I - uh -" Will withdrew his hand from Hannibal and took a step back, a faint panic beginning to gnaw at him. He wasn't ready for this - was he? *What is 'this' exactly? What are you doing?* His thoughts were everywhere and nowhere at once. "I - I think I should get going now."

He thought he saw Hannibal's face fall ever so slightly, though he was mostly preoccupied by the uncomfortable heat in his lower body. The brief pause that hung between them seemed to last an eternity, and Will knew the blood had risen to his face. At last, Hannibal said graciously, "Yes, of course. It's getting late. I'm sure you'll be busy tomorrow?"

"Yeah, thanks for… thanks for the dinner." It was the best Will could manage. Hannibal's eyes were still searchingly sweeping up and down him as he hastily made his way to the front foyer. Will predicted Hannibal would stop him as he pulled on his coat and pushed the front door open, and was almost disappointed that he didn't. *It's for the best. Isn't it?*

Hannibal hadn't returned to John Doe since his first encounter with him. He took pride in his physical and mental toughness, but he never overestimated his own capabilities, and again he reminded himself that this was an unusual circumstance. He was not ready to face another

possible death so soon, and he saw little point in confronting the murderer again. John Doe became an afterthought for him. He merely continued making dinner for Will in the evenings, sometimes visiting Quantico and sometimes not; sometimes going to the crime scene in the afternoon and sometimes not.

It made no difference, because without fail, every evening cumulated in that moment. The kiss.

Was it thanks to Hannibal's fabricated story about his dream? Or did fate and luck come into play? It was the fifth time experiencing it for Hannibal, but he was yet to tire of it. Each time offered subtly different nuances that he delighted in picking up, both in himself and Will. Right now, Will's breathing was heavy, his eyes glazed, but as Hannibal moved to stroke his cheek they grew intensely focused on the man before him, clearly captivated. Satisfaction welled within Hannibal, but he hungered for more. The pertinent question was, did Will?

In several seconds, Will would try to excuse himself and leave as he did the previous four nights. His reason for doing so was obvious - Hannibal could read his arousal like it was written on him. Will was afraid. What could follow had the potential to drastically change their relationship, and like many human beings, Will was resistant to the idea. Hannibal didn't blame him, for even he couldn't claim to know what lay ahead for them. Not that it mattered, but he wasn't about to tell Will that now….

"I - I think I should get going now."

"Will, wait. Please." Hannibal said softly, consciously refraining from reaching out to him. "Can you stay?"

The profiler took a visibly steadying breath, looking down at his shoes before meeting Hannibal's eyes. The air seemed abuzz with their unreleased energy, the flames of the fireplace behind them crackling to match. Despite the silence before his answer, Will didn't sound uncertain when he spoke.

"... okay. I will."

Warm Nights

Chapter Notes

> I'm still getting the hang of writing sex scenes.... that should say it all.... I've also put the rating up if you've noticed. Away we go, there's no turning back now.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal was smiling as he went back to the fireplace to pick up their abandoned wine glasses. Will, somewhat hesitant, followed him past the dining room and into the kitchen, where he set the glassware down in the sink with the other remnants of their meal.

“Well, then,” said Will, feigning a cough. He wished he hadn't broken his glasses in the morning; it would have given his hands something occupy themselves with. As if he had no idea what was about to happen - as if the warmth in his dick wasn't enough of a hint.

Hannibal licked his lips, a hungry shine in his eyes. Knowing him, he could probably smell the pheromones that must be wafting from Will at the moment. Will had subconsciously known that he had sealed his fate in agreeing to stay; it was obvious what Hannibal was implying through that request. Still, looking at Hannibal approach him with an odd kind of... *reverence?* - he couldn’t help but be wracked with uncertainty and disbelief.

With the anxiety came giddiness, simmering dangerously within him. *Stay rational*, he tried to tell himself. It was profoundly exhilarating to him that Hannibal wished to fuck *him*, of all people. He was not a vain man. He had never considered himself particularly attractive in neither mind or body. He was accustomed to people staring at him not in desire, but with thinly concealed curiosity, contempt or both. And, he had been fine with that. He was not one to seek companionship or affections from others, and he was content in his solitude... or so he had thought, until he met Hannibal Lecter.

The flavour of Hannibal was fresh in Will's mouth, but this second kiss was equally arresting and surreal to him. This time, he clutched at Hannibal's collar, popping the top buttons open to expose some of the well-defined chest underneath. Hannibal’s hand snaked down to his navel, deftly undoing the belt buckle and pulling the zipper down; a slow, deliberate movement. Will soon did the same, first untucking Hannibal's shirt. He felt clumsy in comparison, fumbling with the clothes in his eagerness. The burning in his crotch had become unbearable, his cock stiffening against the fabric of his underwear. Hannibal seemed as collected as ever but the profiler could pick up on the faint quickening of his breathing and pulse, the dilation of his pupils. A quick glance down told Will that he, too, was becoming hard.

Will said breathlessly, “We’re - are we staying in here?”

“Why not?” Hannibal grinned, rather devious.

“But… this…. is your kitchen.” Will said, and started to laugh. Hannibal chuckled with him, took him by a shoulder and guided him over to the nearby wall, an empty space next to the sink and a garbage can, absurdly.

“I’m aware.” Hannibal added, “I’ll be a moment.” He disappeared around the corner; when he came back he was carrying an inconspicuous bottle and a small packet with it. It took Will a moment to identify the objects, for they were almost alien in this setting - lubricant and a condom.

Jesus. This is really happening.

Hannibal unscrewed the bottle and pulled his erection free of his underwear, squeezing a dab onto the head of his cock before tearing the condom open with his teeth and rolling it on. His gestures had a practiced fluidity to them like for everything else he did, and Will caught himself wondering about the doctor’s sex life. Half an hour ago he would have dismissed the thought, but now… It took enormous effort for him not to stare.

Hannibal said quietly, “May I?”

Are you fucking kidding me? “Yeah. Of course, yeah.”

Hannibal positioned himself behind Will, his heat enveloping the profiler as their bodies pressed together. Hannibal's hand traced the curve of his ass in an exploratory manner, making him tense of his own accord - not from discomfort but anticipation.

“Relax, Will,” Hannibal murmured, soothing. He started with a finger, then two, then one more. He was almost overly gentle, allowing Will as much preparation as he needed - until at last, he could wait no longer. He wanted more.

He said, hardly above a whisper, “Fuck me.”

“That was rather rude.” Will could hear the smile in his voice.

“*Please*.” The desperation seeped through, making his face redden unbeknownst to the other man.

“Better.” Hannibal pulled his fingers out, and Will immediately felt the cool head of his cock briefly teasing his entrance. He stifled a moan as Hannibal slid into him deeply in one smooth motion. The fullness was overwhelming, tinged with pain, but he wasn’t uncomfortable. This wasn’t the first time he had done this, though it had been a long while since. Hannibal’s arms wrapped around to his front, his fingers pushing under his shirt to explore his chest and belly. Will clenched one of his hands on Hannibal’s thigh, and with the other he massaged his hard cock, its tip now wet with precum.

As Hannibal began to move his hips at a languid pace, Will struggled out of his shirt, letting it slide to the floor, and he savoured the texture of Hannibal rubbing his exposed skin.
He twisted around to look at Hannibal’s face. A fine sheen of sweat coated his skin, the hair

falling into his half-closed eyes, and Will caught a glimpse of sharp bared teeth. Hannibal, noticing that he was being observed, craned his neck forward to capture the younger man in another kiss, hot and moist.

Breaking away, Will inhaled loudly, pushing on the wall with both hands and bracing himself back against Hannibal - he had found his prostate, hitting the spot with each successive stroke. Waves of raw pleasure washed over Will, making incoherent noises escape his throat. He could dimly hear Hannibal's rough breathing in his ear, only serving to arouse him further. Will was on the brink of coming when Hannibal's body bucked behind him, shuddering from his orgasm. Will was ready to let him pull out, but Hannibal gripped his shoulder.

"Keep going," he panted, gruff from exertion. Will realized that somehow, he had held back; he was still hard and fully sheathed inside. "Until I make you come."

"Don't tell me you can *control* cumming."

"I can teach you," replied Hannibal with a sly smile, his eyes sliding closed as he settled back into a steady rhythm. "Dry orgasm. Possible with practice."

"*Jesus,*" Will gasped as Hannibal picked up his pace. There were muffled grunts coming from his chest, buzzing on Will's back. Both of them were losing control over their bodies, their movements no longer synchronized - it didn't take much more time for Will to come close to climaxing again, and this time Hannibal didn't falter. He squeezed his eyes shut as his orgasm overtook him, his cock pulsing with sensation. His fingers sticky from cum, he heard someone cry out and realized it was his own voice, a shapeless and primal thing tearing through his throat. Moments later, he felt Hannibal's grip on him tighten, almost painfully so. The other man let out a low noise that could have been Will's name, the least articulate Will had ever heard him - that alone could have been enough to intoxicate him with pleasure.

How exactly Will had allowed himself to be coaxed up to the bedroom after the meal was anyone's best guess - he had been meaning to leave, if his memory wasn't failing him. He supposed that he was far beyond the point of no return now, and his twitching cock had no complaints regarding the situation. Hannibal was sitting expectantly at the edge of the bed, the buttons of his shirt undone and pants loosened. A grin spread over Will's face at the sight as he pulled off his sweater and slipped out of his shirt, leaving the clothes in a pile by the foot of the bed. Hannibal's disapproving glance only made him chuckle as he sat next to him.

"This is your first warning, Will," said Hannibal, mockingly serious but also somehow intimidating.

In response, Will pitched sideways into him to trap him in a forceful kiss, which he returned with obvious enthusiasm. At the same time, Will's hand travelled through his open shirt, over his stomach, finally coming to a stop at his groin. Hannibal was opening Will's fly, fondling his balls and dick through the thin fabric of the boxers. The younger man pulled away and looked questioningly into Hannibal's eyes for a final time; they were dark with affection and desire. It was more than invitation enough.

As Will helped him out of his pants and underwear, Hannibal leaned back on the mattress, his hands spread out behind him to fully expose himself. Will fingered his shaft, to which he made a low rumbling sound of contentment. Not unlike a feline, the profiler thought with some amusement. He paused to coat his palm and Hannibal's cock with lubricant before beginning in earnest. Not taking his gaze off of Hannibal's face, he moved his hand in steady strokes, feeling the flesh growing satisfyingly firm under his fingers. The other man's breathing was becoming increasingly shallow, his lips slightly parted and eyelids fluttering - never before had Will seen Hannibal's facial muscles lose their impeccable control like this, and the observation sent a warm jolt through his own dick.

"Will," said Hannibal solemnly, a little strained, "I want you in me."

"What?"

"You heard me…" Hannibal pressed his mouth to Will's, his teeth grazing his lower lip. With a free arm, he reached over and offered Will the bottle of lubricant, then rolled smoothly onto the bed, the gesture alluring and beckoning at once.

Will couldn't refuse, of course.

After seeing he had finished squeezing more lube from the bottle, Hannibal grasped his wrist, guiding the arm down his side until their hands were at his groin. Parting his legs, opening himself up, he said, "Go on." It was close to a command, despite what he was asking Will to do. Unable to resist dragging his tongue over Hannibal's nipple at the same time, Will slid in a finger, and the other man quivered involuntarily in response.

"Yes… yes," he was murmuring. "Another."

Will obeyed, feeling the sphincter muscles gradually relax around his digits. He moved them experimentally, and was soon rewarded with a just audible gasp that escaped Hannibal's throat. Several more tries left him panting, almost animalistic - barely holding onto any semblance of composure, his grip on the sheets tight.

Will could tell it was on the tip of his tongue - *Enter me. Now*. He obliged, easing his fingers out and shifting on the bed so that he was sitting with his back to the headboard, then shimmied out of his boxers, casting them aside. Hannibal, perceptive like usual, immediately understood. Will hardly dared move, watching Hannibal add more lubricant then straddle his hips, the litheness of his form effortlessly sensual. Will's erection was throbbing nearly painfully, begging for release. The mere touch of Hannibal's fingers putting the condom on him was enough to send a shiver coursing through his spine, and the psychiatrist's eye glinted playfully as though he had noticed.

"Hannibal," uttered Will meaninglessly, not realizing he had forgone the title.

Hannibal leaned forward and brushed Will's lips with his own before drawing back to position himself above Will's cock, putting his arms around his shoulders. Will held his breath, steadying hands on the other man's pelvis. Hannibal made no sound as he lowered himself onto Will, his eyes half-closed while he acquainted himself with the burn. Without further pause, he began to grind up and down, slowly at first, and Will's hips moved in

tandem autonomously. It was only then Will became aware of the gasps that Hannibal was wringing from him - high and uneven noises he didn't know he could produce. Hannibal pulled him closer, making their foreheads nearly touch. The profiler became acutely aware of every picturesque detail of the man before him - the tendons standing out on his neck, silver-tinted hair darkened from sweat, the furrowed brow and alluring curve of his upper lip… the surprisingly prominent pectorals, the wiry hair covering them - the shape of his cock trapped between their bellies. Will wanted to commit all of it to memory, but his brain was growing fuzzy from the bombardment of sensations it was receiving.

“F-fuck, Hannibal,” He managed through gritted teeth. “Fuck.”

“Shall I stop?” Hannibal's voice, coming from next to his ear, was infuriatingly level, considering… well.

“No! God, no,” spluttered Will. “Feels good. Amazing.”

“Good.” The word came out as a contented sigh - only to be cut short by a hitch in his breathing, caused by Will thrusting up particularly deeply, probably hitting the prostate. Along with a minor surge of childish triumph, Will felt Hannibal's fingertips digging powerfully into his back, likely to leave marks behind. Strangely he relished the thought. He wasn't going to mind having some lingering reminders of this night.

With each grind down, Hannibal was bearing more of his weight onto Will's cock, pushing Will against the headboard at the same time. The hot pressure between his legs grew and grew until Will had to shut his eyes against its overwhelming force; he could hear grunts coming from Hannibal now, sounds that had been previously absent. Almost subconsciously, he took Hannibal’s erection in his palm again, pumping rhythmically to match their movements - moments later, Hannibal's body clenched around Will as he came, pearly ejaculate landing on Will's stomach and chest. He had groaned Will's name when he did, holding on like he intended to never let go. It was the final prod the younger man needed; he, too, climaxed, his back arching and cock pulsing with the orgasm. He buried his face in the crook of Hannibal's neck, the additional contact and heat prolonging his euphoria.

He eased his softening cock out, pulling off the condom, and Hannibal lay in the dampened sheets next to him. *What an excellent fuck.* Will was tempted to say it out loud but he contained himself. Perhaps that would be too vulgar for Hannibal's tastes.

Instead, he said, “Not bad, Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal's head turned towards him, the amusement clear in his expression. “Same to you, Will.” Reaching out to run a hand down Will's arm, he said, “That was quite enjoyable.”

“Yeah,” Will agreed wholeheartedly, and he was happier than he had been in a long, long while. For a moment, his mind was completely clear of images of bloody crime scenes and deranged criminals that wanted to murder him. There was only Hannibal Lecter. He placed his hand over Hannibal's, exhaling in satisfaction.

The fresh smell of soap and shampoo hung in the air of the bedroom, masking the other more... primitive scents that now permeated it. Hannibal had remained awake, watching Will drift off to sleep next to him first. He, too, closed his eyes, letting his various bodily sensations amplify themselves - the pleasant aches in his lesser used muscles, the endorphins lingering in his system, the rawness of his mouth, kissed dry and sore.

Lips pursed, he turned onto his back and stared up at the ceiling. An unusual heaviness weighed on him, and he knew it wasn't due to the physical exhaustion from having sex. He looked at Will's peaceful face, mentally tracing its every line and plane, over and over. He compared it to the image he had recorded yesterday, or the day before. He wondered how it could appear differently tomorrow. The outcomes of each day were becoming increasingly variable with the introduction of this predominantly physiological activity, and it was jarring for Hannibal to not have total command over his own functions. However, a part of him thrilled at the unpredictability of intercourse, being able to bare himself so completely to another.

Will would wake with no memory of this night or any other he spent with Hannibal. Truly regrettable, for they had several wonderful encounters already - but only Hannibal had the privilege of remembering them all. If only he was given one more day... He shifted to his side again and put his arm over Will, pulling him closer. Will, in his semi-consciousness, made a soft sound and laid his head against Hannibal's chest, then blearily opened his eyes.

“I wouldn't mind doing this more often,” he said thickly, seeming to be half-asleep.

“Nor would I,” Hannibal said, quiet.

Will lifted his face, alertness returning to his eyes as he propped himself up on his elbows. “You should sleep, Dr. Lecter.”

“Call me Hannibal. This is no longer a… professional setting.”

Will laughed; Hannibal still delighted in the relative rarity of the occurrence. “No shit. Alright, if you say so.” Will was passing his fingers over his chest, so terribly fondly.

“Besides, you already had, anyway.”

“What? Called you by name?” He frowned.

“Yes, twice tonight.”

Will, flustered, broke eye contact and focused intensely on a spot on Hannibal's collarbone. “Oh. I'm sorry - I didn't mean to - ”

“Don't be. You deserve at least that much,” said Hannibal, stroking his cheek with a thumb. Will kissed him, lips caressing his jaw and fingers threading through his hair. Hannibal's eyes shut, transcribing the exact pressure and touch to memory like every other moment of this night.

“Goodnight, Hannibal.”

Listening to his heartbeat beating in time with Will's, Hannibal didn't allow himself to fall asleep until midnight - after which he would be alone in his bed once more.

Chapter End Notes

Plot? What plot.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!